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2 **TITLE:** SECURED THREADING NUT DECKING CLAMP
3 AND METHOD FOR MAKING SAME
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8 BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

9 This utility patent application claims priority to copending U.S. Provisional Application,
10 Serial No. 60/431,502, filed December 6, 2002, and which is incorporated herein for all
11 purposes.

12 The present invention relates to decking clamps used in underhung roof systems.
13 Additionally, and more particularly, the present invention provides a method for manufacturing
14 and assembling a decking clamp having a secured threading nut in the clamp.

15 Decking clamps are not new but rather well known in the art. Therefore, the present
16 invention is a significant improvement in a very crowded art field. The current state of the art
17 relating to such clamps and clamping systems includes U.S. Pat. Nos.: 2,949,140 (1960);
18 3,147,003 (1964); 4,155,206 (1979); 4,417,431 (1983); 4,476,659 (1984); 4,543,760 (1985);
19 4,575,983 (1986); 4,796,403 (1989); and 5,511,354 (1996).

20 Particularly pertinent in the prior art are Metal Building Components, L.P.'s Classic
21 Canopy Clip and U.S. Pat. No. 6,257,565 B1 (2001) to Houston et al. The technical disclosure
22 of U.S. Pat. No. 6,257,565 B1 is incorporated by reference herein for all purposes. While the
23 Classic Canopy Clip does not utilize a threaded nut to retain and guide the clamping bolt, U.S.
24 Pat. No. 6,257,565 B1 does teach and disclose a clamp having a removable threading nut resting
25 within a single-slot, retention channel.

26 The present inventive clamp is a significant improvement in the art and allows for the
27 more labor and cost efficient manufacture of the C-shaped clamp while ensuring that the

1 threaded guiding and retaining nut is securely retained within the clamp housing. The improved
2 clamp is made via a method which simplifies the assembly of the clamp. The improved design
3 of the present invention ensures that when the clamp is being used in an underhung roof system,
4 the nut does not become dislodged and fall out of the housing while the installer is attaching the
5 clamp to the roofing panels. This relatively simple but significant advance in design solves a
6 long-standing problem with the prior art. When the nuts of the prior art clamping devices slip
7 from the housing, the installer must stop work on the clamping operation, secure the roof panel
8 by alternative means, locate a replacement nut, insert the new nut into the housing and rethread
9 the clamping bolt. All of this extra effort slows the assembly time for the roofing system
10 increasing the overall cost for the construction, unnecessarily delaying project completion, and
11 leading to considerable, unnecessary frustration of the installer.

12 BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

13 Fig. 1 is a top, front, right side perspective view of the present invention.

14 Fig. 2 is a front, elevation view of the template and retention nut (the nut is shown in
15 perspective).

16 Fig. 3 illustrates a left side, elevation view of the folded housing of the present invention
17 with the secured retention nut in place.

18 Fig. 4 shows a top plan view of the folded housing of the present invention with the
19 secured retention nut in place.

20 Fig. 5 illustrates an exploded perspective of the present invention with the fastener
21 member ready for insertion into the clamp housing.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENT

Reference is made to the drawings of the present invention. Fig. 1 discloses an assembled decking clamp 10 having a substantially C-shaped housing 12 having first 14 and second 16 opposing arms and a clamping cavity 18 with a gap opening 20 in the cavity. A threaded retention nut 22 is secured within a two section or two opening notch 24 in a front section 26 of the first opposed arm 14. A threaded fastener member 28 having a rotation nut 30 and a stop plate 32 extends through a channel 34 formed in the folded clamp template 11. The fastener member 28 further threadingly passes through and is retained and guided by the retention nut 22. Nut 22 is secured within the two section notch 24 behind a front vertical partition wall 36 and held in place by the compression of side walls 38 and 40 to a gap width W_1 which is less than the outer diameter D of the nut 22. As may be seen in Figs. 1 and 4, when side walls 38 and 40 are compressed the gap width may vary between the front W_1 to the back W_2 . In some embodiments the front gap W_1 may be more than the back gap W_2 (or vice versa) but always the gap W_1 is less than the diameter D of the nut 22. The fastener member 28 may be rotated clockwise and counterclockwise to vary the width G of gap opening 20 between the head 28A of the fastener member 28 and the second opposed arm 16. It will be understood by one of ordinary skill in the art that the rotation of the fastener member 28 allows the clamp 10 to secure roofing panels to the appropriate frames and/or adjacent panels in an underhung roof system.

Fig. 2 illustrates a front elevation view of the generally planar template 11 of the present invention. The template may be composed of any composition which may be easily fabricated and bent or folded and retain the desired folded configuration. Such compositions may include steel, aluminum, metal alloys, high strength moldable plastics, and other functional equivalents. The template 11 is generally symmetrical about its transverse axis A and its longitudinal axis B.

1 The transverse axis A divides the template into a right side wall section 34 and a left side wall
2 section 40. The longitudinal axis B divides the template into an upper section 50 and a lower
3 section 52.

4 Notch 24 (Fig. 1) is constructed by the cooperation of a right side retention nut opening
5 24A and a left side retention nut opening 24B in upper section 50 of template 11. These
6 openings 24A and 24B are spaced equidistance apart from the transverse axis A and are
7 separated by the partition wall 36 between the openings 24A and 24B. U.S. Pat.
8 No. 6,257,565B1 discloses a prior art clamp blank with a single, elongated notch. Thus it is
9 possible to retrofit such prior art blanks for use with the present invention by spot-welding or
10 otherwise providing a partition wall centered in the notch.

11 The clamping cavity 18 is formed by a large opening 18A in a central section 54 of the
12 template 11. The shape of opening 18A is symmetrical about the longitudinal and transverse
13 axis of the template. As will be understood below, the folding of the template creates side walls
14 38 and 40, clamping cavity 18, and notch 24. The lower opposing arm 16 is formed by the
15 folding of the raised tab 16A while the inner, upper edge 14A of the opening 18A forms the
16 upper opposing arm 14.

17 Thus, the clamp 10 of the present invention is made by bending, folding, or molding the
18 template 11 along the transverse axis A into the C-shaped clamp 10 shown in Fig. 3. It will be
19 understood that as the template is folded into sides 38 and 40, flat face 22A of nut 22 may be
20 placed against the rear side of partition wall 36 with outer nut diameter and nut edges 22B and
21 22C extending through openings 24A and 24B, respectively. Once the sides 38 and 40 are
22 folded to a width W between the sides (which is less than the outer nut diameter D), the nut 22 is
23 secured within the notch 24 and will not rotate or pop out (see Fig. 4).

1 Turning now to Fig. 5, it may be seen that fabrication of the clamp 10 is completed by
2 passing the threaded fastener 28 through a channel 34 in the upper section 50 of the folded C-
3 shaped clamp 10 and then threading the fastener through the secured nut 22. By proper
4 threading, the head 28A of member 28 forms a variable gap opening 20 in the cavity 18. The
5 width G of the gap corresponds to the degree of rotation of the threaded member 28 through the
6 nut 22 and the distance of the head 28A from the lower opposing arm 16.

7 Although the invention has been described with reference to a specific embodiment, this
8 description is not meant to be construed in a limiting sense. On the contrary, various
9 modifications of the disclosed embodiments will become apparent to those skilled in the art upon
10 reference to the description of the invention. It is therefore contemplated that the appended
11 claims will cover such modifications, alternatives, and equivalents that fall within the true spirit
12 and scope of the invention.